

REMARKS

Prior to further examination, applicants respectfully request entry of the Amendment and Reply filed on March 23, 2004, and the amendments made in the present Amendment Submission. Claims 1-7 were pending in the present application. Claim 2 has been amended, claims 8-11 have been added, and no claims have been canceled. Accordingly, claims 1-11 are pending in the application and are submitted for consideration. Please note that this Submission is supplemental to the Amendment and Reply filed on March 23, 2004, so that the current amendments further amend the claims beyond the March 23, 2004 status and applicable arguments from the March 23, 2004 reply are incorporated by reference herein.

This amendment changes and adds claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claim(s) remain under examination in the application, are presented. The text of all claims presently under examination is presented above in the listing of claims, and all claims are presented with an appropriate defined status identifier.

Applicants sincerely thank the examiner for indicating that claim 2 contains allowable subject matter. Accordingly, applicants have amended claim 2 to place that claim in independent form and submit that claim 2 is now in condition for allowance in accordance with the indication in the prior Office Action dated December 30, 2003.

In the December 30, 2003 Office Action, claims 1 and 6-7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.K. Patent Application 2,347, 120 (hereafter UK '120). Claim 3 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over UK '120 in view of Japanese Patent 6-107103. Claim 4 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over UK '120 in view of Japanese Patent 6-144141. Claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over UK '120 in view of Gray et al. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections for at least the following reasons.

With respect to claim 1, please refer to the arguments presented in the amendment and reply filed March 23, 2004, which are incorporated herein.

The remaining dependent claims are patentable for at least the same reasons as claim 1 on which they ultimately depend. In addition, they recite additional patentable features when considered as a whole.

For example, claim 7 recites, *inter alia*, that the second hinge portion is bent in a stage where the inflation pressure of the air bag is lower than a predetermined value while the first hinge portion only bends when the inflation pressure of the air bag body is at least the predetermined value. This recited structure is simply not disclosed or suggested by UK '120. The Office Action implicitly acknowledges that UK '120 does not disclose or discuss this claimed feature explicitly. Rather, the Office Action (and the Advisory Action) incorrectly asserts (as best understood by the applicants) that the single layer hinge 5b must bend before alleged hinge portion 5e, as part 5e is covered by a portion 9c of the joiner 9. However, as is very clear from Fig. 6 of UK '120 (and its description in the text), the alleged hinge 5e does not bend and in fact retains its right-angular shape when the lid 4 of the air bag is opened. In this regard, the assertion in the Advisory Action of 5b/5e bending in two places is simply not the case because 5e does not actually bend. The other portion that may arguably bend is the joiner 9 (applicants are not sure if the examiner is somehow pointing to this portion) at the "point" where the portion 9c of the joiner connects to the rest of the joiner 9. Even if it were possible to point to this section as being relevant, the relative bending of these parts largely depend on the flexibility of the material of the joiner 9 with respect to the material of the hinge 5b on this point. There is no disclosure or suggestion in UK '120 of the relative flexibility of joiner 9 and the hinge 5b to teach or suggest the claimed feature. Therefore, there is simply no disclosure or suggestion in UK '120 or in the prior art of the hinge 5b bending at lower than a predetermined pressure value at which the joiner 9 would bend. What may be possible does not satisfy the requirements for anticipation. In this context, it should be noted that it is impermissible to use the applicants' own invention to find features in the prior art which are not disclosed or suggested on the basis of the prior art itself.

Therefore, neither the claimed structure of claim 7 nor its advantages are disclosed in the UK '120. Since these deficiencies in UK '120 are not cured by any of the other applied references, independent claim 7 is believed to be patentable over the applied prior art.

Dependent claim 6 recites that the first hinge portion has a flexural rigidity greater than the second hinge portion. As discussed above, this feature is not disclosed or suggested in the applied prior art. Claims 8 and 9 recite that the first and second hinge portions are themselves bendable, which is not the case in the examiner's interpretation of UK '120 since

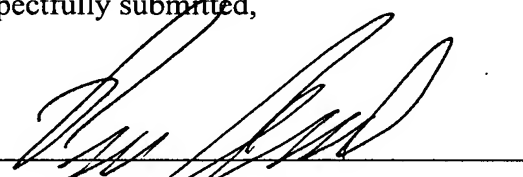
the alleged hinge portion 5e is not itself bendable. Claim 10 stresses that the predetermined value is the operational value for air bag operation. Claim 11 recites that the first and second hinge portions are formed integrally. These recited features are also not disclosed or suggested by the applied prior art and provides additional reasons for the patentability of these claims.

If there are any questions regarding the application, or if an examiner's amendment would facilitate the allowance of one or more of the claims, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the local telephone number below.

Should additional fees be necessary in connection with the filing of this paper, or if a petition for extension of time is required for timely acceptance of same, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge deposit account No. 19-0741 for any such fees; and applicants hereby petition for any needed extension of time.

Respectfully submitted,

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